

## Recovery

In-patient care & admission to a treatment centre is highly recommended if not almost mandatory for a successful outcome in cases of intravenous opioid abuse. A reduced fee can occasionally be negotiated for doctors at some centres. The value lies in the group therapy and attendance at AA or NA meetings whilst a patient. A doctor can easily slip into the role of being a medical advisor to other patients which is distracting and often prevents them looking at their own problems. It is also sometimes a coping mechanism and can fuel denial and delay the self-honesty required for a good recovery. At an AA meeting, you are there because you have a drinking/drug problem and being a doctor is secondary to that. It is possible to learn an awful lot about how to live without drink or drugs from an office clerk or bin-man who is long-term sober – far more than from any doctor or Psychiatrist. It can often take a good deal of humility as a doctor, to recognise & accept this!

If there can be an advantage to being known to the GMC, it is that the regular hearings, appointments with Assessors and hair-testing (the latter especially) are a good way of making the doctor stay drug-free. Monitoring is SO important. Alongside aftercare sessions at the treatment centre this rigorous monitoring is what has provided so many successes in the USA, and with our own equivalent, the Practitioner Health Programme (PHP - see below).

## Useful numbers - addiction

### **Practitioner Health Programme (PHP)**

<http://www.php.nhs.uk/> **0203 049 4505**

This is an NHS funded but entirely confidential service open to doctors and dentists (living or working in the London area only). Care is multidisciplinary in nature and provides appropriate specialist care and support for any doctor with addiction, mental or physical health concerns. Where inpatient therapy is thought necessary, this will be organised and funded by the PHP/NHS. Follow-up, monitoring and help with returning to work are also part of the services offered. Unfortunately this is currently only available to London-based doctors, but there are hopes that plans for expansion to cover other areas of the country will eventuate. Advice has been most useful, & can be obtained by phone however, even if outside the London area.

### **Sick Doctors Trust (SDT)**

[www.sick-doctors-trust.co.uk](http://www.sick-doctors-trust.co.uk) **0370 444 5163 \***

The SDT is an independent charity established over 18 years ago, which provides a 24 hour helpline manned exclusively by experienced doctors who are in recovery from addiction themselves, or trained counsellors. It provides help and support to doctors who think they may have a problem with their use of alcohol or other drugs, whether prescribed or not. Calls are treated with strict confidentiality, and callers may remain anonymous if they wish.

Help offered includes assessment, advice, referral for treatment when appropriate and introduction to long term befriending and support services. The helpline also accepts calls from family members or friends, concerned colleagues, PCT officers and others.

### **The British Doctors and Dentists Group (BDDG)**

Contacts: 07976 717211 North of England; 07771 642 682, the national secretary, or via the Sick Doctors Trust helpline: 0370 444 5163. [www.bddg.org](http://www.bddg.org).

This is a countrywide network of doctors and dentists at various stages in recovery from addiction, who are well again and who meet on a monthly basis at one of 18 groups covering the UK. Following initial contact, callers may be put in touch with another doctor (in some cases from the same speciality) nearer to their home who may then introduce a new doctor to the group at the local meetings.

Problems can be discussed at these meetings which it may not be appropriate to discuss at meetings of AA or NA for instance GMC proceedings and issues surrounding return to work etc.

Doctors under the GMC for substance abuse problems will be required to attend these meetings as conditions on their practice, or as part of their stipulated undertakings. Certificates and proof of attendance can be obtained from the group secretary and given to the GMC.

There is also an associated families group, where direct relatives of addicted doctors and dentists can obtain help and support. Each BDDG meeting usually has a families group.

### **Ireland – contacts**

Support in Ireland is unfortunately rather lacking at present. A service has recently been set up but funding not yet finalised.

NIDDG contact: John B Belfast 07710 741169. drjburton@btinternet.com. He can also give some legal advice.

**Support for family members of addicted doctors can be obtained via the families Group of the BDDG** - <http://www.bddgfamilies.org.uk/> or 0207 485 5231

### **Healthcare Professionals Recovery Group (HPRG):**

These monthly meetings are attended by doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists & other healthcare professionals who have addiction problems. They too are confidential and offer similar help and support to that of the BDDG.

Contacts: Oxford: 07967824213 London (Chertsey): 01737 813921

### **Narcotics Anonymous**

National Helpline 0300 999 1212 or 020 7730 0009 [www.ukna.org](http://www.ukna.org)

Narcotics Anonymous is for recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. It is not restricted to those with opiate/narcotic abuse problems as the name may suggest, but any drug including tranquillisers, recreational drugs and alcohol. The website contains some questions and information for those who think they may have a problem.

Do you think you may have a problem? - check lists may be found on:

[http://www.na.org/admin/include/spaw2/uploads/pdf/litfiles/us\\_english/IP/EN3107.pdf](http://www.na.org/admin/include/spaw2/uploads/pdf/litfiles/us_english/IP/EN3107.pdf)

The majority of AA or NA meetings are 'closed' and are only for recovering addicts/alcoholics and those who think they may have a drug problem. A meeting described as 'open' may be attended by anyone e.g. Professionals working with addicts or family members, friends etc. Meetings lists are on the AA or NA websites with details of open meetings at each venue.

### **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)**

UK helpline: 0845 769 7555 \*\*\*, [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk) Calls are charged at local rate on BT lines

Do you think you may have a problem? Check lists: <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/About-AA/Newcomers>

\*\*\* If using mobile phone, there are cheaper landline numbers for your local office available via the website [saynoto0870.com](http://saynoto0870.com) (insert the number above into the search box) which will give a local number.

### **BMA Doctors for Doctors**

This is a helpful option for mental health concerns, but is not addiction specific. It is not necessary to be a BMA member. There is currently a pilot scheme running with the GMC to provide support for doctors at their hearings, and along the course of their GMC involvement. Uptake has been good & favourably reviewed.

Up to six counselling sessions are available for members or helpline support. Callers can also ask to speak to Doctor Advisor. Three of these advisors are anaesthetists.

The BMA can help with some of the employment laws and issues surrounding return to work after a period of suspension or ill-health.

**Doctors' Support network (DSN):** a group with regular meetings throughout the country for help with stress, burnout, anxiety, depression, psychoses and eating disorders. This may be helpful for addicted doctors with dual diagnosis.

Contact: [secretary@dsn.org.uk](mailto:secretary@dsn.org.uk) or 0871 245 8376 for general enquiries

**Doctors' Support Line (DSL):** – 0844 395 3010 or 0870 765 0001

A confidential and anonymous peer support helpline for doctors who need to talk to someone whatever their concerns. Doctors in the group have themselves been troubled at some stage in their lives, and help is offered to those who are beginning the process of re-establishing themselves after a breakdown or other mental crisis.

<http://www.dsn.org.uk/> for further information

### **SMART Recovery**

The 12-step approach may not be appealing to everyone. SMART Recovery uses psychotherapeutic techniques that are similar to those used in many treatment services in the UK, being more along the lines of CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy). The concept started years ago, with on-line meetings with a facilitator, which many found helpful, and now there are many meetings 'on land' also, extending from Banff right down to Brighton. Details can be found on the website.

### **Financial help**

**Royal Medical Benevolent Fund (RMBF)** 0208 540 9194

– very helpful – will send an assessor to the doctor's home. Long term support often, even to a doctor's family after they themselves have died if hardship continues.

### **The Royal Medical Foundation**

Exists to support medical practitioners and/or their dependents who find themselves in financial difficulty.  
[rmf-caseworker@epsomcollege.org.uk](mailto:rmf-caseworker@epsomcollege.org.uk) or call 01372 821010

**BMA Charities Trust Fund** 020 7383 6142 or email [info.bmacharities@bma.org.uk](mailto:info.bmacharities@bma.org.uk)

Help for doctors with financial difficulties during life crises who are not working.

### **The Cameron Fund**

For GPs only

There are other charities and details can be obtained from a member of the Sock Doctors Trust.

Dr Ruth Mayall 07976 717211 [ruth.mayall@virgin.net](mailto:ruth.mayall@virgin.net)